

***Tears in the Pages: A Compounded Reflection on Four Years of Life***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

*Madison E Lyon*

**Thesis Advisor**

*Dr. Jason Powell*

**Ball State University**

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## **Abstract**

As we make our way through life, we are met with many particularly influential moments. One such moment is our college years. In my time as a student at Ball State University, I have laughed, cried, and everything in between. From my greatest accomplishments to my most embarrassing failures, I have learned more than just what I was taught in my classes. In this memoir, I share my experiences as a student and continually reflect on their effect on my life in general and my personal growth.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all the beautiful friends and colleagues and family members that inspired this great memoir. Thank you to Dr. Rai Peterson for her role as master book binder and inspiring faculty member. Thank you to Dr. Jason Powell for being the best way to end my first day at college. And, of course, for acting as my thesis advisor, nominating me for the Trimmer Prize, and reading through my entire college life.

Thank you to my mother, Holly Fogwell, to my friends, Andy Thieme and Hannah Partridge, and to my significant other, Charlie Cummings, for taking the time to get interviewed.

Thank you to the two friends in particular who soured moments of my life: I truly hope you are happier now.

Thank you to my parents, Holly and Seth Fogwell and Troy and Adrianne Lyon. I would not have made it here without their love and support.

Thank you again to Charlie, who has been with me as my significant other and best friend since the beginning of college. Sorry I told the dean we kiss a lot.

And finally, thank you to my dog, Juno; to my late dog, Maria; to Team Lyon's dogs, Ralphie and Sylvia; to the print shop dogs, Roscoe and Galileo; to Charlie's dog, Inka; and to the (hopefully) hundreds of dogs I got to pet while being a student here at Ball State.

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## Process Analysis

I began my journey into my thesis like many Ball State Honors students: with fear and self-doubt. I poured over countless ideas for research topics and creative endeavors. Following my English capstone seminar, which included learning basic book binding skills and writing a personal memoir, I was inspired to push my short document a step further into a fully fleshed out story.

I began with the most general of ideas. Where my capstone project focused on my entire life, I wanted my thesis project to focus on a shorter span of time. I had reflected often about the cliché importance of the college experience; about how, as much as we don't want to be a box office teen movie, college is one of the most influential times in our lives. From there I wasn't sure how to categorize my experience.

Some of my original documents had the following:

You'll Cry at the End

A Telling of the Important Things that went into My College Experience

By Madison E Lyon

Topic ideas:

Relationship with family

SVS /CK/ESA fail

Charlie ACA

Rachel "I know that I'm going to fail sometime in my life. I'm going to mess up big time. I want it to matter."

/Jenny/John

Academics

Animals

My hours in Service

Muncie as a community

The importance of getting involved



I then moved further than just general topics. I tried to come up with a way to put my experiences in college into neat boxes, easy to write short stories for. I came up with a new set of ideas:

## College Memoir

### "A Story about Love"

In College, we come in with these very strict ideas about how the world works and how fit into it, but if you open your mind and open your heart you will fall in love with everything you do

#### 1. A Story about Leaving

Idea: I'm not going to miss my family

Reality: I'll pull away and realize the ways that I differ from my family, but two years later, I will long to be home

Talking about accepting my anxiety and my changing ideas and the effects that leaving has had on me

#### 2. A Story about Service

Idea: Service is about doing

Reality: Service is about learning

Talking about Service in Muncie, breaking the stereotypes of our armpit of a town

#### 3. A Story about Language

Idea: I know how to speak Spanish

Reality: I am still learning how to speak Spanish

Talking about my experience in Spain

#### 4. A Story about Relationships

Idea: You have to find your other half/ If you've found your other half you can't be anything without them

Reality: Your friends are just as important/ You can (and should) have an identity outside of your S.O.

Talking about my relationships with my friends and that boy I like

#### 5. A Story about Muncie

Idea: Muncie has done this to itself and it can't be helped

Reality: Muncie was left behind and it's our job to do what we can to help it

Talking about the history of Muncie and what we're doing to improve it

## 6. Another Story about Leaving

Since my English capstone class with Rai Peterson, I enrolled in Book Arts Collaborative. Here I improved my book binding abilities and gained confidence in my own creativity. To add a unique spin on a classic style of storytelling, I decided that I wanted to hand-bind my memoir.

With all of these ideas in mind, I had to decide who was going to be my advisor. I framed a short list made up with different professors, all of which I would be honored to have advising me.

I chose Jason Powell for a number of reasons: 1) I had been in his Honors 200 sequence, so he already knew my writing and also 2) he had just the charismatic encouragement that I was going to need.

I sent him my ideas and replied quickly: "Mads, I love this idea."

Starting the process was by far the hardest part. As I sat in my home last summer, preparing to go to Spain, I pulled out my computer. I stared at the blank document titled "Thesis Draft," willing words to the page. I set my hands on the keys and tried to remember the beginning of the beginning—applying for college.

I started at as far back as I could remember, adding the heartbreak of losing the Whinger and the stress of leaving the very first day. To remind myself of my mindset four long years ago, I had the four goals that I had set for myself in High School:

1. I knew that I wanted to improve upon my experience in high school
2. I knew I wanted to be a professor
3. I knew I wanted to run away
4. I knew I was terrified

Starting with a short page long document, I stewed on my ideas for four months in Spain. After returning the states and the unfortunate reality that my thesis did not write itself while I was away, I met with my advisor. Jason encouraged me to just get started—the rest will follow.

I arranged a series of note cards and masking tape on the back of my bedroom door, putting my life a series of categories: important people, accomplishments, and failures.



From there I drew a time line in masking tape and had a different note card for every month, each with a short list of important events.

I looked like a conspiracy theorist.

But it gave me the spring board to jump off at. I looked back at Facebook posts and Instagrams, trying to remember everything I could. I wrote some longer stories, complete with the dialogue that I could remember (and some that I could make up). I also wrote some shorter paragraphs, trying to keep the story flowing.

I wanted something extra to fill in my memories—I decided to conduct a few interviews with integral people in my life. I had higher hopes of conducting too many, but settled with the three that I was able to get. I used them to balance my own memory, trying to add to my own recollection or showcase their side of the story. I added emails and scanned letters here and there to provide additional evidence for my experience.

My original plan for organizing and laying everything out were abandoned, but it yielded something even better than I expected. I kept coming back to those four goals from High School; I kept reflecting on my reflections, creating an effect like when you stand in between two mirrors and the image seems to go on forever.

This Ball State University Honors thesis is hand-bound in a Secret Belgian style of binding. One of the newest widely used bindings, its secret lies in its ability to hold all of the pieces together. I like to imagine this binding as a metaphor for adulthood: we walk around as beautiful works of art, keeping secret how we manage to keep it all together. This memoir is my secret revealed.

Secret Belgian was not always my favorite binding, but it has become higher on my list. My go-to binding is a Coptic with words sewn into the spine, but for this project I wanted something a little more classic looking.

This thesis is bound in a series of five—historically, a series was defined as collection greater than four. This showcases my abilities as a book binder in both skill and consistency.

The final form was bound in the spring of 2018 with binder's board, archival pH neutral glue, waxed thread, and white printer paper. The cover and spine were decorated with an antique map and hand-marbled paper from a local artist in Muncie. The paper came from Tracey Jerret—an artist who works at Art Mart in the village.

I am very proud of work on this thesis. My ideas evolved and transformed into something even more beautiful than I could imagine.

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